Annex to the letter dated 21 June 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of the Russian Federation (March 2013)

Introduction

Under the presidency of the Russian Federation, the Security Council carried out an extensive programme of work during the month of March 2013. The Council held 34 meetings and closed consultations. The Council adopted six resolutions and agreed on eight statements to the press.

Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 5 March, the Council heard an open briefing by the Secretary-General, who presented his special report on the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region (S/2013/119). The Secretary-General informed the Council of his efforts, which had resulted in the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region by 11 leaders of regional countries on 24 February in Addis Ababa. The Secretary-General stressed that that document provided an innovative comprehensive approach to the worrisome situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which envisaged a combination of actions at the national, regional and international levels and a set of recommendations on the support by the international community for the implementation of the Framework. Among them were the decision to appoint a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the proposal to enhance the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) by deploying an intervention brigade carrying out a peace-enforcement function.

The Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo expressed the gratitude of his Government for the personal involvement of the Secretary-General in the process of preparation and signing of the Framework and called on the Security Council to authorize the deployment of the intervention brigade as a matter of urgency against the deteriorating situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council commended the efforts of the Secretary-General and his team, which resulted in the signing of the Framework, aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict. They stressed the importance of its strict implementation by all the signatories. One member stated that the Framework should not replace ongoing regional peace initiatives but should rather build on what had been achieved and give momentum to the whole process.

Members of the Council generally supported the recommendations to enforce the mandate of MONUSCO to enable it to better implement its tasks on protection of civilians. Several members of the Council expressed concerns about the possible deployment of the proposed intervention brigade recommended by the Secretary-

General in his special report after consultation with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), given the possible implications of having United Nations peacekeepers take on a peace enforcement role and the possible impact on United Nations peacekeeping principles in general. Others supported the possible deployment of the intervention brigade as a means to end the cycle of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provided appropriate measures were taken to mitigate risks to civilians and all United Nations personnel.

On 6 March, the Council held a private meeting with the troop- and police-contributing countries to MONUSCO. Following briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, and the Military Adviser, Lieutenant General Babakar Gaye, there was an exchange of views on technical details for the future deployment of the intervention brigade.

On 22 March, the Council issued a statement to the press, welcoming the surrender of Bosco Ntaganda to the International Criminal Court in The Hague and paying tribute to all victims of serious crimes of international concern in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the statement, the members of the Council expressed their appreciation to the Governments of Rwanda, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, as well as to the International Criminal Court, for facilitating the surrender of Mr. Ntaganda to the Court. The members indicated that they viewed Mr. Ntaganda's surrender to the International Criminal Court as a positive step for international criminal justice as well as towards the restoration of peace and security in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The members recalled that those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, as well as for violence against children and acts of sexual and gender-based violence, must be held accountable. They also recalled that the Commander of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), Sylvestre Mudacumura, was still at large in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On 28 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2098 (2013) setting out a new, comprehensive approach aimed at addressing the root causes of instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region through, inter alia, the formation, on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent or any prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping, of an intervention brigade within MONUSCO to address the problem of armed groups. Several members of the Council took the floor. While some members commended the decision to form such an intervention brigade recommended by the Secretary-General in his special report after consultation with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC, some others voiced concern about the possible impact on United Nations peacekeeping principles. It was stressed that the brigade should focus on the negative forces that were still active in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, one Council member adding that the brigade should bolster the peace process in the region, including the Kampala talks. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and la Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Raymond Tshibanda N'tungamulongo, expressed gratitude for the Council's authorization of the intervention brigade, as requested by his Government, and other United Nations efforts to help to protect his country's territorial integrity and foster peace and stability over the past 15 years.

Guinea-Bissau

On 6 March, in consultations of the whole, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, introduced the report of the Secretary-General, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2048 (2012), on the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau (S/2013/123), and underlined limited progress in that regard. National stakeholders remained divided and the military continued to interfere in politics, while international partners remained unable to elaborate a common assessment of the situation and the challenges on the ground. It was confirmed that the consolidated report of the African Union, Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, Economic Community of West African States, European Union and United Nations joint assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau that was designed to reach such common understanding was still being finalized. The Assistant Secretary-General expressed satisfaction over the announcement by the International Monetary Fund of the resumption of its activities in the country.

The members of the Council took note of the decision by the Heads of the States members of the Economic Community of West African States to extend the transition period in Guinea-Bissau and their call to its Transitional President to propose to the country's National Assembly a revised draft transition road map for the preparation and conduct of free, fair and transparent general elections before the end of 2013. The necessity and urgency for such elections were also stressed.

Somalia

On 6 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2093 (2013), by which it extended until 28 February 2014 the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the United Nations logistical support package for AMISOM. In the resolution, the Council endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal to replace the United Nations Political Office for Somalia with a new expanded special political mission, and decided that the new mission should integrate the United Nations country team under the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Council decided that the Director of the United Nations Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) would report to the Special Representative in respect of UNSOA services to the new special political mission, but would retain an independent reporting relationship to the Department of Field Support in New York in respect of its primary task of supporting AMISOM. The Council also partially lifted for a period of 12 months the arms embargo imposed on that country, in particular on specific supplies intended solely for the development of the security forces of the Federal Government of Somalia and to provide security for the Somali people. The Council also agreed with the Secretary-General that the conditions in Somalia were not yet appropriate for the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, but requested that he keep that under review, including through the setting of benchmarks for when it might be appropriate to deploy a United Nations peacekeeping operation.

Somalia/Eritrea sanctions

On 12 March, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, Kim Sook, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on the Committee's work over the past

120-day period, with a focus on its informal consultations of 15 February and the findings and recommendations of the midterm briefing of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea.

The members of the Council recognized that the security situation in Somalia remained volatile and that strict adherence to the sanctions regimes, including arms and charcoal embargos and individual sanctions, was key to the promotion of the Somali peace process. While most members commended the partial suspension of the arms embargo provided for in resolution 2093 (2013) as aiming at strengthening Somalia's security sector, some other members of the Council expressed the opinion that the move was premature, given the risks of arms proliferation.

Members of the Council took note of the Monitoring Group's information on its improving relations with the Government of Eritrea. Some members called upon Asmara to abide by its obligations to meet the Group in Eritrea as soon as possible.

Sudan/South Sudan

On 12 March, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Haile Menkerios, and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, briefed the Council in consultations of the whole. The former described as a "very positive development" the adoption, by the Joint Political and Security Mechanism on 8 March, of the decisions on the establishment of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. He also expressed hope that the adoption on 12 March of the Implementation Matrix on the Agreements of 27 September 2012 would move their implementation forward. At the same time, he stressed that two outstanding issues had a strong bearing on relations between the Sudan and South Sudan — the ongoing conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and the delayed implementation of the interim arrangements for and progress in settling the final status of Abyei. The Special Envoy emphasized that the start of direct talks without preconditions between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) was crucial for reaching a cessation of hostilities that would allow humanitarian access and create a conducive atmosphere to find a political solution to the conflict in the two areas.

The Under-Secretary-General briefed the Council on the security situation on the ground. He characterized the decisions of 8 March of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism as a crucial step in building confidence between the Sudan and South Sudan, and outlined the steps taken by and expected from the two countries and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to effectively proceed with the establishment of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and the activation of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism along the agreed timelines.

The members of the Council called for full and timely implementation of the arrangements of 8 and 12 March and all the agreements of 27 September 2012, including the withdrawal by the parties of all forces from the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and the resumption of oil production. They stressed the need for launching direct political negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and SPLM-N, agreeing on cessation of hostilities and addressing the humanitarian situation in the two areas.

Some members of the Council expressed scepticism regarding the parties' readiness to implement the latest agreements, referring to their previous record of non-compliance with the arrangements reached, and stressed the need for the Council to apply pressure to ensure the fulfilment of resolution 2046 (2012). Other members underlined the importance for the Council to be balanced and unbiased in relation to both parties, and to encourage their further constructive engagement in order for them to reach mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues.

On 27 March, during an informal interactive dialogue with the Council, the Chair of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, Thabo Mbeki, commended the recent progress in implementation of the agreements of September 2012 and March 2013 between the Sudan and South Sudan, in particular on border security. He expressed hope for an early resumption of negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and SPLM-N with a view to reaching a political solution to the crisis in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and addressing the humanitarian situation in the two areas. He expressed his belief that both the Sudan and SPLM-N wanted a lasting cessation of hostilities, and optimism that the African Union Panel could help to build sufficient trust between the two sides to enable that to be agreed. He also stressed the need for the implementation of the temporary arrangements and the stabilization of the situation in the Abyei Area. The Chair of the African Union Panel emphasized an imperative of continued negotiations between the Sudan and South Sudan on the final status of the Area, whose progress was dependent upon further improvement in bilateral relations. He called on the Council to respond positively to the request of the Sudan, South Sudan and UNISFA regarding the establishment of a protection force for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. He also stressed the need to support the joint outreach by Juba and Khartoum to seek financial assistance to both countries and to encourage the alleviation of the Sudan's external debt. The Chair of the Panel urged the lifting of economic sanctions against the Sudan, calling them counterproductive and devoid of any rationale. He warned against possible attempts by "spoilers" to disrupt the Sudan/South Sudan peace process. He reported the desire of SPLM-N to participate in discussions about the activities of the Joint Mechanism.

Members of the Council welcomed the progress in materializing the agreements between Khartoum and Juba, particularly on border security and the resumption of oil production, and emphasized the importance of their implementation. They noted the parties' efforts in searching for sustainable solutions to key outstanding issues, including establishment of the temporary institutions of the Abyei Area and determination of its final status, and reiterated their support for the mediation of the African Union Panel and the Special Envoy. The Council looked forward to an early launch of negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and SPLM-N. Some members stressed the need for an immediate cessation of external support to the rebels and called on them to give up the agenda of bringing down the Government in Khartoum by force. They also called for mobilization of financial assistance to both countries, alleviation of the external debt of the Sudan and lifting of economic sanctions on the latter. Other members emphasized the urgency of addressing the grave humanitarian situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, deplored the aerial bombardments in the two areas, and called for the Sudan to extend full cooperation with the United Nations to enable immediate emergency humanitarian relief to the affected populations.

Sierra Leone

On 13 March, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), Jens Anders Toyberg-Frandzen, presented, in an open briefing, the tenth report of the Secretary-General on the mission's activities (S/2013/118). He stressed that, notwithstanding the progress that the country had made over the past decade, challenges still remained, particularly in tackling the root causes of the conflict. The political divide and polarization along regional ethnic lines needed to be addressed. Sierra Leone's national institutions, including the justice and security sectors, had to be strengthened in order for them to effectively discharge their respective responsibilities. Poverty and youth unemployment remained serious challenges. The priorities articulated in the Government's Agenda for Prosperity aimed to achieve those and other key objectives. While the Government took the lead, international assistance remained essential. The Executive Representative concluded that it was appropriate to begin a phasing out of UNIPSIL responsibilities to the United Nations country team, and he stressed the importance of other international partners' support for the continued development of Sierra Leone, in the light of the drawdown of UNIPSIL.

The Permanent Representative of Canada, Guillermo Rishchynski, in his capacity as Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, highlighted the priority areas for the configuration in the near term in order to support the transition process, including advocating for necessary resources to fill possible gaps created by the drawdown of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

The Council also heard the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, Samura M. W. Kamara, who assured the Council of his Government's readiness, willingness and interest in cooperating with the Security Council towards ensuring a smooth and seamless transition from UNIPSIL to a resident coordinator system that would eventually mark a successful outcome of the UNIPSIL mission and, in general, United Nations intervention in peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone.

In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council commended the progress achieved by Sierra Leone and agreed that UNIPSIL had fulfilled its mandate and should transition over the next 12 months to the United Nations country team.

On 26 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2097 (2013), by which it extended the mandate of UNIPSIL for one year, until 31 March 2014, and decided that the Mission should be fully drawn down by that date. The Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone expressed appreciation for the Council's continued support to his country's efforts.

Libya

On 14 March, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Tarek Mitri, briefed the Council on recent developments in Libya. He commended President Mohamed El-Magariaf and Prime Minister Ali Zeidan for efforts to defuse tensions and provide efficient security measures during the anniversary of the Libyan revolution,

which did not destabilize the country. The Special Representative said that the United Nations had urged caution on the adoption of a political isolation law. He was pleased to note the Government's measures to accelerate the screening of detainees and their transfer to State-controlled detention facilities. He said that, despite the fact that the Libyan people had come a long way "since the liberation of the country 17 months ago", security problems remained formidable and were arguably the predominant concern for most Libyans. He noted that the country remained awash in unsecured weapons and munitions that continued to pose a regional security risk, given Libya's porous borders. Significant progress in improving the country's precarious security situation remained hampered by weak State institutions and security coordination mechanisms. In that regard, he noted that safeguarding Libya's democratic transition would require an inclusive dialogue leading to genuine national reconciliation. Notwithstanding those difficulties, the Government had resolved to move forward to enhance security and address the proliferation of weapons and presence of armed groups, and UNSMIL would continue to provide assistance in that regard. The Special Representative added that, given the legacy bequeathed to the Libyan people by the former regime, the process of democratic transition would surely face an array of obstacles requiring long-term responses.

The Council adopted resolution 2095 (2013), by which it extended the mandate of UNSMIL for another 12 months and that of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011), and made adjustments to supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use, and related technical assistance or training. The Prime Minister of Libya and the Permanent Representative of Rwanda, Eugène-Richard Gasana, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya, addressed the Council.

In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council expressed their support for the activities of UNSMIL and highlighted its important role in stabilizing the situation in Libya, supporting the democratic transition and overcoming serious challenges the country was facing. Some members of the Council recognized Libya's progress in moving forward with a transition. Some others raised particular concerns over the security situation in the country, especially in its eastern part and along the southern borders, the proliferation of arms, mistreatment of detainees and continued detentions without due process. The need for a process of national reconciliation, transitional justice and an inclusive national dialogue in the country was stressed. The importance of strict implementation of the sanctions regime was also highlighted.

Mali

On 18 March, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on the humanitarian situation in Mali. She noted that the humanitarian situation in Mali was partly a consequence of the ongoing vulnerability in the country as well as of the political upheaval, significant violence and conflict following the coup in March 2012 and subsequent fighting between Tuareg and violent radical groups. More than 447,000 Malians had been displaced since January 2012, placing a huge strain on host communities in central and southern Mali and neighbouring States. She referred to reports of an increase in the number of

returnees after the beginning of the French and Malian military operation, but underlined that hundreds of thousands of people were likely to remain displaced for the foreseeable future. She highlighted the fact that the 2013 Humanitarian Appeal was only 15 per cent funded. The members of the Council expressed concern over the serious humanitarian crisis and supported the work of humanitarian agencies in Mali. It was stressed that, in order to find a comprehensive solution to the crisis in Mali, the underlying issues which had caused it should be addressed.

On 27 March, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Edmond Mulet, briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on major political and security developments in Mali and highlighted the key observations and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Mali (S/2013/189), including two options for a possible United Nations engagement in the country. It was stressed that, in the interplay between political and security priorities, it was of critical importance to ensure that the security imperative did not detract from the imperative for political progress in Mali. The Assistant Secretary-General said that the extent to which the United Nations could or should assume responsibility for security and stabilization in the light of the French military efforts was a key question before the Council. Members of the Council underlined the importance of national reconciliation and dialogue in Mali. There was a preliminary exchange of views on the options for a possible United Nations engagement in Mali.

Central African Republic

On 20 March, in consultations of the whole, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), Margaret Vogt, informed the Council of new attacks and the renewed seizures of towns by rebels from the "Seleka" coalition. She said that on 17 March the insurgents had issued an ultimatum with a number of conditions, threatening to march towards Bangui if those were not met within a 72-hour deadline. She expressed serious concern at the worsening humanitarian situation, including the looming food crisis, and also cited reports of gross human rights violations and abuses in Government- and "Seleka"-controlled areas. She stressed that all parties to the Libreville Peace Agreements of 11 January 2013 should show their commitment to the latter through concrete actions.

The members of the Council expressed strong concern at the rapid deterioration of the political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation in the Central African Republic, reiterated their support for the Libreville Peace Process under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and called upon the Government and "Seleka" to abide in good faith by their commitments. They urged the conflicting parties to immediately cease hostilities and seek political settlement through negotiations.

Following the discussion, the Council issued a statement to the press in which it condemned the recent "Seleka" attacks, stressed the need for all parties to the Libreville Agreements to fully implement their commitments, commended the efforts by ECCAS supported by the African Union to resolve the crisis, called on all parties to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access and to safeguard humanitarian property, and called on the "Seleka" leadership and the Government of

the Central African Republic to ensure that their forces respected human rights and international humanitarian law.

On 22 March, in consultations of the whole, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs informed the Council that after the expiration of the 72-hour deadline the "Seleka" rebels had resumed their advance towards Bangui and faced no resistance from the Government army or ECCAS regional peacekeeping forces (MICOPAX). Government and MICOPAX troops had occupied strategic positions in preparation for a possible attack on the capital.

The members of the Council called upon the conflicting parties to fully implement their obligations pursuant to the Libreville Agreements, immediately cease hostilities and resolve the crisis through negotiations. They commended the support to the peace process by ECCAS, the United Nations, the African Union and other partners and reiterated their concern over the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in the Central African Republic.

On 22 March, the Council issued a statement to the press expressing strong concern at the advances of armed groups towards Bangui and the ensuing humanitarian consequences, recalling the press statement of 20 March, in particular the need for all parties to the Libreville Agreements to fully implement their commitments, calling on them to refrain from acts of violence against civilians and to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and recalling the need to hold accountable those responsible for violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law.

On 25 March, following the consultations of the whole on Liberia, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs informed the Council that "Seleka" rebels had entered Bangui and on 24 March had captured the presidential palace. Thirteen members of the South African training contingent had died during the takeover of the capital. President François Bozizé had reportedly fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Cameroon. "Seleka" leader Michel Djotodjia had proclaimed himself the new President of the Central African Republic and declared the validity of the Libreville Agreements and the retention of the transitional Prime Minister, Nicolas Tiangaye, as head of the Government of National Unity. Some reports indicated possible splits within the "Seleka" coalition. There was widespread looting of property in Bangui, including that of some United Nations staff residences, as the rebels entered the city. Most of the international staff and their dependants would be evacuated, with 40 critical United Nations personnel remaining in the Central African Republic. The Assistant Secretary-General stated that further deterioration of the security situation seriously hampered humanitarian efforts in Bangui.

The members of the Council condemned the seizure of power by force by the "Seleka" and the ensuing violence and looting. They expressed heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of South Africa on the deaths of and injuries to South African soldiers. They reaffirmed their continued support to the Libreville Agreements as the viable basis of a peaceful solution to the political and military crisis in the Central African Republic.

On 25 March, the Council issued a statement to the press in which it called for the restoration of the rule of law, constitutional order and the implementation of the Libreville Agreements as the framework for political transition, reaffirmed the

important role played in that process by ECCAS with the African Union's support, noted the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council to suspend the participation of the Central African Republic in all the activities of the African Union and the latter's decision against the "Seleka" leaders, called on all parties to refrain from any acts of violence against civilians, including foreign communities, to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access and to fully respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and re-emphasized the need to hold accountable those responsible for violations and abuses.

South Sudan

On 21 March, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Hilde Johnson, in an open briefing to the Council, noted that the country continued to face multiple challenges, while progress had been achieved in some areas. The situation in the country continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region. She expressed concern at the proliferation of weapons, activities of armed groups, political fault lines, intercommunal violence and land disputes in several areas that posed grave threats to the civilian population. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remained challenging, and humanitarian actors reported impediments to their work. Also worrying were the increased reports of threats to freedom of expression and respect for human rights in South Sudan as well as impunity and lack of accountability within the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The operating environment for the United Nations had become more challenging owing to a number of grave violations of the status-of-forces agreement. The most egregious of those occurred on 21 December 2012, when SPLA forces shot down an UNMISS helicopter, killing four Russian crew members. The Special Representative stressed that the United Nations had urged a swift and transparent investigation by the Government and would shortly publish the results of its own internal enquiry. She briefed the Council on security sector reform as well as progress towards establishing national institutions. The Legislative Assembly, she noted, had begun to carry out more active oversight, including audit and budgeting functions. UNMISS had also introduced additional flight security measures.

The Under-Secretary of South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Charles Manyang D'Awol, acknowledged that South Sudan still faced many challenges. The country continued to build its national institutions, despite numerous internal and external challenges. He stressed that an inclusive national reconciliation process was sorely needed, and significant investment by other parties and continued support by UNMISS were required, to help the 18-month-old State to project its authority and develop capacity to govern volatile areas.

In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council expressed concern over the increasing tensions and violence within South Sudan and noted the effects of North-South tensions on South Sudan. They underlined the need for the South Sudan authorities to remove all impediments to humanitarian activities. The primary responsibility of the Government for protection of civilians was emphasized. The members of the Council expressed concern at the deteriorating human rights situation in the country. Condolences were reiterated to the Government and people of the Russian Federation on the shooting down of the UNMISS helicopter with Russian crew members. The Council called for conducting

a swift and thorough investigation, bringing to account those responsible and taking measures to avoid such tragic incidents in the future. The Government of South Sudan was urged to fully cooperate in the implementation of the UNMISS mandate. In that regard, some members of the Council expressed concern at the increased security incidents involving Mission personnel, including the wounding on 12 March of an UNMISS peacekeeper. Some members also expressed concern regarding the refusal by the Government to rescind its decision of October 2012 to expel an UNMISS human rights officer. The Council underlined the importance of further improvement of relations between the Sudan and South Sudan for stabilizing the internal situation in the latter.

Liberia

On 25 March, the Council heard, in an open briefing, a presentation by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Karin Landgren, of the twenty-fifth progress report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Mission (S/2013/124). She underlined the need to proceed with the phased drawdown of UNMIL while moving swiftly to address the remaining social inequality, political infighting, and other historic and current fissures that had led to decades of war and still ran deep. In order to achieve lasting peace, fairness and the inclusion of all Liberians were required. One positive step in that direction was a conference held by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to launch the National Vision 2030 as a long-term political and economic goal to bring about a fair political system, security, rule of law and national reconciliation. Another positive achievement was the launch of Liberia's First Justice and Security Hub on 12 February in Gbarnga with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund. Nevertheless, corruption and tensions between branches of the Government remained at the forefront of political life as well as the atmosphere of mutual distrust among Liberia's primary political actors.

Ambassador Staffan Tillander of Sweden, in his capacity as Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, informed the Council of the results of his recent visit to Liberia, which allowed him to consult the Government on the ways to accelerate progress on security sector reform, rule of law and national reconciliation and to finalize the second review of the statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia.

In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council expressed their satisfaction with the fact that the security situation in Liberia remained stable. They welcomed the launch of a national programme to achieve social cohesion and socioeconomic development as well as the ongoing dialogue on issues related to constitutional reform, decentralization and national reconciliation, which should lay a foundation for sustainable peace and the country's long-term stability. The members of the Council commended the Government of Liberia for the progress in improving the criminal justice system and ensuring the rule of law and described the launch of Liberia's First Justice and Security Hub, allowing for increased access for the population to justice and security services, as a positive step towards the consolidation of peace. The members of the Council encouraged the Government to pay greater attention to preventing impunity for crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, especially against minors. They also stressed that land issues remained a potential source of recurrent conflict in Liberia and encouraged the

Government to establish functional dispute resolution mechanisms to address specific land disputes.

Asia

Middle East (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force)

On 6 March, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations informed the Council of the detention earlier that day of 21 peacekeepers of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) within the area of limitation by armed elements of the Syrian opposition, who identified themselves as the Martyrs of Yarmouk Brigade. Following the meeting, the Council issued a statement to the press, in which the members of the Council strongly condemned the detention of the UNDOF peacekeepers and demanded their unconditional and immediate release. The members called upon all parties to cooperate with UNDOF in good faith and reaffirmed their unconditional support for UNDOF.

On 8 March, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on the efforts made to guarantee the safe release of the detained peacekeepers. He noted that various interventions of the United Nations and other supportive interlocutors had helped in reaching some progress. The armed group promised UNDOF that its detained military personnel could be released in a few hours. At the same time, the Syrian armed forces agreed to cease fire to allow the peacekeepers safely to leave Jamla, the village where they were kept. In order to reduce the threat to UNDOF personnel, the mission had started reconfiguration of its operations to ensure the fulfilment of its mandate in a safe and secure manner.

On 26 March, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on the Secretary-General's report on UNDOF (S/2013/174). He said that the United Nations appreciated the Council's support to UNDOF, and noted that the situation in the UNDOF area of operations was increasingly volatile because of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. He stressed the risks of the situation to the security of the personnel of UNDOF and of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, which made it difficult for UNDOF to carry out its tasks freely and had led to the decisions by Japan and Croatia to withdraw their contingents. Owing to safety and security risks, the United Nations continued to stress to the Syrian authorities the need to facilitate the entry of UNDOF personnel through the Bravo gate, including for the troop rotation scheduled for May.

The members of the Council expressed their support for the measures taken (reducing patrols, reinforcing positions, providing armoured vehicles and personal protection kits) to mitigate risks for the United Nations personnel while ensuring the fulfilment of mandated tasks. They also expressed support for exploring alternative ways to ensure secure rotations and supply lines. The members of the Council agreed that any military activity in the area of separation conducted by any actor posed a risk to the long-held ceasefire, the local civilian population and United Nations personnel. Some members emphasized the urgency of a political solution to the Syrian crisis as well as the necessity for a comprehensive settlement of all aspects of the Middle East problem. The members of the Council welcomed the practice of convening informal meetings, within the framework of resolution 1353

(2001), with the UNDOF troop-contributing countries, such as the one held on 22 March.

On 27 March, the members of the Council issued a statement to the press, in which they expressed grave concern at all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In that regard, the members expressed grave concern at the presence of the Syrian Arab Republic armed forces inside the area of separation. Furthermore, the members expressed grave concern at the presence of armed members of the opposition in the area of separation. The members of the Council expressed their deep concern at the risk that all military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor posed to the long-held ceasefire and the local population. They called on all parties, including armed elements of the Syrian opposition, to respect the freedom of movement of UNDOF and the safety and security of its personnel, while recalling that the primary responsibility for safety and security on the Bravo side rested with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. To that end, the members of the Council called on all parties to ensure safe and secure rotation activities of UNDOF, including through considering the temporary use of an alternative port of entry and departure as required.

Middle East (Lebanon)

On 14 March, the Special Coordinator of the Secretary-General for Lebanon, Derek Plumbly, and the Director of the Asia and Middle East Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Izumi Nakamitsu, briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). They stated that the situation along the Blue Line and in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained calm, which was a significant achievement, but expressed grave concern at the violations of Lebanon's sovereignty by Israeli aircraft. They also noted the worrying increase in tension in Lebanon itself, as well as the negative impact of the Syrian crisis on stability in Lebanon, including cross-border shelling from the Syrian Arab Republic. The Special Coordinator praised the Government of Lebanon for keeping its borders open to refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and urged the international community to provide additional assistance to Lebanon in this regard.

The exchange of views by the members of the Council was reflected in a statement to the press issued after the meeting. They underscored their grave concern over repeated incidents of cross-border fire, which caused death and injury among the Lebanese population, as well as incursions, abductions and arms trafficking across the Lebanese-Syrian border, and other border violations. The members of the Council underlined the importance of full respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and the authority of the Lebanese State, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Deep concern was expressed at the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon's stability. Members of the Council stressed the need for all Lebanese parties to respect Lebanon's policy of disassociation, consistent with its commitment in the Baabda Declaration. The members commended Lebanon's generous efforts in hosting and assisting refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and called upon the international community to follow through on humanitarian aid pledges made during the Kuwait Conference of 30 January 2013.

On 25 March, during his open briefing to the Council, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Robert Serry, emphasized that Lebanon's stability required that all parties respect Lebanon's policy of disassociation, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration, and remain united behind the President, Michel Sleiman. He referred to the Council's press statement of 14 March, which underlined that it was important for Lebanon's continued stability that all parties make swift progress to ensure that parliamentary elections take place on a consensual basis within the legal and constitutional framework. He recalled that the press statement clearly recognized the fragility of the situation in Lebanon, expressing deep concern at the impact of the Syrian crisis on the country's stability, and mentioned reports of incidents involving shelling of the Lebanese territory from the Syrian Arab Republic.

In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council confirmed their commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as well as the authority of the Lebanese State, underlined the need for all parties to uphold Lebanon's policy of disassociation, and expressed support for the leadership of President Sleiman in forming a new government.

Afghanistan

On 19 March during the debate, the Secretary-General presented his report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2013/133) and expressed the view that Afghanistan's political climate was dominated by the 2014 elections, and that broad participation and credible process were essential for reaching the goal of a widely accepted leadership transition. He also stressed that the United Nations was reflecting on its future role in Afghanistan and preparing for challenges ahead and should continue providing good offices, including support for the upcoming elections. The Secretary-General added that the United Nations should also maintain its work for reconciliation and regional cooperation, stand for human rights and advance development in order to reinforce Afghanistan's own efforts in those areas and strengthen Afghan political processes and institutions. He expressed his particular concern over the spike in poppy cultivation, as shown in the opium risk assessment, and the considerable increase in civilian casualties, especially among women and girls, in 2012. The Secretary-General underlined that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), in fulfilling its mandate, had to maintain its ability to reach out across the country and to meet the many demands it faced during that crucial period. While the budget of UNAMA for 2013 reflected significant reductions, he did not envisage additional reductions for 2014.

The Permanent Representative of Afghanistan said that, for the Afghan people, national sovereignty meant taking full responsibility for their destiny. He reiterated the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to fair, democratic and transparent elections. The members of the Council, as well as non-Council member States taking part in the debate, reconfirmed their unequivocal commitment to the peaceful transition process in the country. They underlined, in particular, that transparent and credible elections in Afghanistan in 2014 should contribute to national reconciliation. The members of the Council stressed that all the parties involved in the reconciliation process should renounce violence, have no links to international terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaida, and respect the Afghan

Constitution, including its human rights provisions, notably the rights of women, and be willing to join in building a peaceful Afghanistan. In the lead-up to Afghanistan after 2014 and the assumption by the Afghan authorities of complete responsibility for the security situation in the country, members of the Council expressed concern over the number of victims of the internal conflict, especially among women and children. Neighbouring and all interested countries were called upon to play a constructive role in Afghanistan. Drug and precursor trafficking and related transnational crime were characterized as being among the major problems undermining Afghanistan's way forward. It was acknowledged also that the United Nations, especially through UNAMA, must play a role in preparations for Afghanistan's milestone of 2014 and beyond.

The Council adopted resolution 2096 (2013), by which its extended the mandate of UNAMA for another year, until 19 March 2014.

Iraq

On 21 March, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Martin Kobler, briefed the Council on the situation concerning Iraq. He highlighted the challenges facing the country, including volatility on the streets with demonstrations in Iraq's western provinces continuing since December 2012 and strained relations between the central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Concern was expressed about the decision to postpone provincial council elections in Ninewa and Anbar Provinces. He drew attention to the efforts of UNAMI to advance political dialogue and national reconciliation through its good offices, and mentioned the progress achieved towards the normalization of relations between Iraq and Kuwait. The Permanent Representative of Iraq also addressed the Council.

In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council expressed their support for the role played by UNAMI, welcomed the steps taken by Iraq and Kuwait towards normalization of their relations and stressed the importance of Iraq's fulfilment of its remaining obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. It was pointed out that security remained a major concern, with political instability exacerbating the socioeconomic situation.

Middle East

On 25 March, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Robert Serry, briefed the Council in an open briefing on the situation in the Middle East. He expressed cautious optimism regarding recent developments on the Israeli-Palestinian track, including in the light of the visit of the President of the United States, Barack Obama, to the region and his meetings with the leaders of both sides, and commitments reiterated by them to the two-State solution despite their difference on its terms and the way forward. He also underlined the Israeli-Turkish agreement on restoring normal relations and noted no new settlements announcements, fewer incursions by the Israeli security forces into the West Bank and a decrease in the demolitions of Palestinian structures. He noted, however, that the level of settler violence remained high and expressed concern at a serious setback in the implementation of the Gaza ceasefire, with new rockets fired into Israel and restrictions renewed on fishing

limits and movement of Palestinians into and out of Gaza, as well as repeated closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing.

Nevertheless, the Special Coordinator suggested that the new opening could be developed into a serious and substantial political initiative leading to meaningful negotiations, and called on the parties to demonstrate political will and determination to make progress and on the international community to act in concert through a revitalized Quartet that engages more broadly with Arab partners, and regional and other stakeholders.

In the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council shared the Special Coordinator's cautious optimism, stressed the necessity of launching the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue without delay, and expressed hope for renewed United States engagement in reaching a positive outcome. They warned against unilateral measures by the parties, particularly with regard to Israeli settlement activities, and condemned the recent rocket fire from Gaza into Israel. Some members stressed the need for the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority. In this regard, many welcomed the decision by the Government of Israel to transfer Palestinian tax revenues in a timely manner and without disruption.

Middle East (Syrian Arab Republic)

In his briefing on 25 March, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General touched upon the continued worsening of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic by stressing that limited signals by the parties towards the possible start of a dialogue had so far not materialized. He pointed out the tragic humanitarian consequences of the conflict and noted the Secretary-General's decision to conduct an investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons in the country. He said that the Secretary-General believed that all allegations should be taken seriously. During the consultations of the whole that followed, the members of the Council called for a speedy political solution to the Syrian conflict. They supported the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, and reconfirmed their support for a negotiated solution to the conflict based on the Geneva Communiqué. Some members of the Council praised the decision to grant the seat of the Syrian Arab Republic in the Arab League to the National Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, while others criticized the move as counterproductive. Some members of the Council expressed concern over reports of the use of chemical weapons in Khan al-Asal and called for an immediate independent United Nations investigation of the case with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice. Some other members of the Council said that any and all credible allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic should be pursued, and in this regard mentioned other reports of the use of chemical weapons in Homs and Damascus that the Secretary-General's team also needed to investigate immediately with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Europe

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

On 22 March, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Farid Zarif, informed the Council that, since his last briefing in November 2012, there had been some important positive developments thanks to the direct Belgrade-Pristina engagement in the high-level political dialogue facilitated by the European Union. He said that the political dialogue was at a critical stage and encouraged the Council to take stock of the achievements made so far and to support both sides in their endeavours to reach agreements, especially regarding difficult issues specific to the situation in northern Kosovo. He reported that significant challenges on the ground remained and cited adverse security incidents, frequent instances of inflammatory rhetoric, and posturing from various quarters, as well as increased tension in northern Kosovo and the wave of vandalism against Orthodox sites and the destruction of a Second World War monument. He expressed gratification with the Kosovo police's timely and unambiguous statement on the acts of vandalism and further appropriate and welcome actions that had been taken by the Kosovo authorities, including the allocation of public funds for the repair and reconstruction of the graves and monuments. He indicated that representatives of the international community had unanimously condemned such wanton acts and, together with UNMIK staff, had been instrumental in encouraging more proactive public responses from local and central political authorities. The Special Representative also mentioned that too many serious crimes in northern Kosovo, as well as those affecting communities in the rest of Kosovo, continued to go unresolved and remained a matter of very sober concern. He underlined that the ending of budget allocations to the UNMIK administrative office in Mitrovica had undermined the most functional channel available to address problems in the north through consensus. He concluded by saying that for the vital political talks to achieve their maximum potential there was a need for strenuous, constant and coherent work on the ground both by the mandated international presences and by local leaders.

The Council also heard the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, and Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo, who confirmed their commitment to the political dialogue facilitated by the European Union.

The members of the Council welcomed the progress made in seven rounds of the dialogue and expressed their support for it. They expressed deep concern regarding the fragile security situation following a wave of vandalism that had taken place across Kosovo in mid-January, during which around 200 gravestones in several Serbian Orthodox cemeteries had been damaged and destroyed. Some members of the Council stated that those incidents had happened in reaction to the removal by the Government of Serbia of a monument in southern Serbia. Some members were also troubled by the destruction of a Second World War memorial and the lack of progress in returns of internally displaced persons. The members of the Council reaffirmed their support for investigating incidents of organ trafficking in Kosovo. They called on UNMIK to continue to fulfil its mandate in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Latin America

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

On 6 March, the members of the Council observed a minute of silence in remembrance of the late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías.

Haiti

On 20 March, the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and interim Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Nigel Fisher, presented the Secretary-General's report on the Mission's activities (S/2013/139). He stressed that the holding of credible elections in the country in 2013 was fundamental to reinforce Haiti's democratic institutions and respond to the urgent needs of the population such as employment and social development. In order to meet these and many other challenges Haiti was facing, the Mission had devised a consolidation plan which provided key objectives over the next three years, in particular to strengthen security, rule of law, elections administration and institutional modernization. Specifically, the plan set out four core tasks: development of the Haitian National Police, the strengthening of a permanent electoral commission once it was created, strengthened rule of law and respect for human rights, and supporting key national and local governance reforms. It also foresaw the reduction of the Mission's uniformed strength.

In the debate that followed, the members of the Council underlined the importance of the creation of the Electoral Council so that free and fair legislative, municipal and local elections could be held as soon as possible. Among other priorities, they mentioned the strengthening of the Haitian National Police and national justice institutions. They also confirmed that lasting stability in Haiti depends on improved socioeconomic conditions.

Broad support for the ongoing efforts to eliminate the cholera epidemic was also voiced. The members of the Council generally welcomed the consolidation plan and underlined that it needed further consideration; they acknowledged that the relatively stable security situation would likely allow MINUSTAH to implement a drawdown without undermining stability.

Thematic and general issues

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 5 March, during consultations of the whole, the delegation of the United States of America introduced a draft resolution (S/2013/136) following the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 12 February.

On 7 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2094 (2013), in which it condemned in the strongest terms the third nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 12 February, reaffirmed the Council's decision that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes as well as ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and further strengthened sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In the resolution, the Council

also affirmed that it would keep the country's actions under continuous review and expressed its determination to take further significant measures in the event of a further launch or nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Non-proliferation/Islamic Republic of Iran

On 6 March, the members of the Council held a public meeting to hear an open briefing by the Permanent Representative of Australia, Gary Francis Quinlan, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), on the work of the Committee from 5 December 2012 to 4 March 2013. He informed the Council that the Committee had held one meeting, during which, among other issues, some incident reports were discussed, and that the Committee had adopted two implementation assistance notices (on conventional arms and related materiel and on financial and business measures), designated two entities (Yas Air and SAD Import Export Company), updated the lists of nuclear-related and ballistic missile-related items and conducted additional work using the no-objection procedure. During the reporting period, the Committee received a number of communications relating to the implementation of the relevant Security Council measures.

The members of the Council commended the efforts of the Committee in carrying out its mandate and renewed their firm support for the work of that body. Some members expressed concerns regarding the continued non-compliance by the Islamic Republic of Iran with resolutions of the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency and its both clear and possible violations of sanctions. Other members stressed that conclusions regarding any violations should be based on reliable evidence. The members of the Council reiterated their support for negotiations in the framework of the five plus one group and underlined the need for seeking a comprehensive and long-term solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations.